

# breaking down barriers at groundwork market gardens

By Ellen Mintzer

When you enter Groundwork Market Garden (GMG), an urban farm located on Genesee Street in Buffalo, you discover that the unassuming lot is teeming with lush greenery. An abundance of fresh produce thrives in the hot summer sun, the garden beds bursting with eggplant, peppers, cucumbers, and beans. There are raised beds with asparagus, strawberries, and blueberries, and a hoop house (a greenhouse-like structure where crops are grown right from the ground) overflowing with juicy tomatoes and suffused with the heavenly aroma of fresh basil.

Mayda Pozantides, GMG's Head Farmer, and her partner Anders Gunnarsen, the system's builder, purchased the two-acre vacant lot for their urban farm at a city auction in 2014. They worked tirelessly for two years to prepare the lot for farming, and by 2016, they had successfully transformed one of the acres into arable land. They grow crops in the spring, summer, and fall, and use the hoop house for a small amount of winter growth. GMG recently won a \$50,000 grant from Ignite Buffalo, and Mayda and Anders hope to use that money to increase production by expanding both their outdoor field and indoor space.

Mayda, who has been farming for eight years, was inspired to create an urban farm in this area in order to provide resources for the community. This area of Buffalo is a certified food desert, and Mayda is passionate about providing its residents with access to fresh, organic produce. She says she had a desire to "do something meaningful, to have an impact on the community." Both Mayda and Anders see food as a way to connect all people across social barriers, saying, "Food is something that breaks down all those social constructs." They want to use the farm as a source of both food and education.

GMG includes a farmstand which accepts SNAP benefits, including electronic transfer benefits. Furthermore, Mayda and Anders participate in a youth outreach program called the Fresh Food Fellows Urban Agriculture and Entrepreneurship Program, and a Community Supported Agriculture co-operative program. Fresh Food Fellows is a collaborative effort between GMG, Groundwork Buffalo, Grassroots Gardens, and the Field and Fork Network. Through this program, local young people receive classroom education about agriculture

and entrepreneurship, build their own garden, and perform paid on-site work in the garden. Meanwhile, with Community Supported Agriculture, locals can pay an upfront cost and receive freshly harvested produce for the duration of the summer growing season.



Mayda and Anders have big plans for the future of GMG. With the help of the Ignite Buffalo grant, they hope to not only expand the fields, but also host other businesses that share their passions and values in the on-site building. They look for food- and health-centric businesses that share their commitment to community education and are hoping to create a space where "lots of folks are in and out, just doing good work for the community." Most of all, Mayda wants GMG to be a space that offers accessible resources for the local community and makes them feel welcome.

Find GMG's produce at the North Buffalo Farmer's Market Thursday evenings from 4-7 pm through the end of October. To learn more about becoming involved with Groundwork Market Garden and their CSA program, or to support them in their efforts, visit [www.groundworkmg.com](http://www.groundworkmg.com), call 716-908-7396, or catch them live on Millennium Health Matters radio Monday evening, September 10 at 7:30 pm at 96.5 FM or WUFO Mix 1080 AM.

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